Hamlet’s two interactions with the ghost seem to contradict one another. The first time the ghost presents itself to Hamlet, the surrounding men clearly see it as well. Horatio even says, “It beckons you to go away with it/ As if it some impartment did desire/ To you alone” (I.iv.63-65) proving that he sees the ghost too. When Hamlet encounters the ghost the second time, his mother does not see it. She asks, “To whom do you speak this?” (III.iv.149) while Hamlet converses with the ghost.

Some may believe that the fact that Hamlet only sees this ghost may suggest that he is losing his sanity. On the other hand, it may also be an example of Freud’s division of the mind into three fractions: the id, the ego, and the superego. In this instance the ghost may represent the ego. According to Freud’s theory, the ego helps to control the id’s primal instincts. Hamlet’s initial instinct is to harm his mother out of rage. While he viciously accuses her of incest and other wrong-doings, the ghost appears to remind him that “This visitation/ Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose” (III.iv.126-127). The appearance of the ego at this point would also disprove his mother’s accusations that he in “ecstasy” (III.iv.158), seeing as Freud believes that the ego connects the id with reality. Shakespeare uses the ghost to help Hamlet remember the task that he has been assigned and also as a part of Hamlet’s conscience.